

PREFACE

The history of Korea dates back 4,291 years to the first King, Dangun, the mythical founder of Korea. Her people are an ancient and homogeneous race, distinct from both the Chinese and the Japanese. In the cultural field, Korea was the channel through which the civilization of China and the religion of India were transmitted to Japan. Also by the ingenuity of her people, she made a great contribution to the world through many inventions.

Trying to satisfy their national pride as well as to identify the written language with their own speech, they tended to abolish the use of Chinese characters in their belles lettres, because it differed from Korean in morphology and syntax. The Korean alphabet of 24 letters, invented in 1443, one of the world's most highly-regarded phonetic alphabets, has been used extensively as the best medium of expression in modern Korean literature.

Modern Korean writers have been suffering for a long time from the political and economic difficulties which have been imposed on them from outside. Their pleasure was to seek something in literature to display their gloominess, indefatigability, and humour. We have a hidden power and hope for the future, with which we will overcome our difficulties.

We have shown in our modern literature as well as during the recent Korean War an ability to integrate the Western science with our spiritual home-life, and thus we are equipped to fight against any aggressions whether political or cultural. As a whole, modern Korean literature can be called "The Literature of Resistance against Imperialism and Communism."

I have been associated with the literary movements of Korea for the last thirty years, both in my capacity as professor in Language and Literature at our universities, and as the author myself of literature for children, critical essays, poems, and plays, and as the translator of literature. I have been personally acquainted with most of our writers and have trained many young men of letters. When I came to London in 1950, to teach at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, I started some more translations of Korean folk tales, novels, plays, and poems into English. Here I have selected twenty short stories by twenty contemporary novelists from six books, "The Korean Literary Readers", by a Korean Linguist, the late Yi Yun-Zê, two volumes of short stories from the "Modern Korean Literature Series", edited in 1938 by a novelist and critic, the late Ham Dê-Hun, "Short Stories of Contemporary Authors", edited in 1949 by the novelists Gim Song and Gim Gwang-Zu, "Thirty-three Living Authors", edited in 1950 by a poet and critic, Gim Gwang-Sôb, and a long novel, "The Soil", written by the pioneer of modern Korean literature, Yi Gwang-Su,

In bringing out this volume of modern short stories from Korea, I may be helpful to the reader if I now give short comments on their stories included in this book. "The Green Chrysanthemum" (No. 3) and "The Memorial Service on the Mountain" (No. 15) show the domestic tragedies which were caused by early marriages arranged by parents. "The Penance" (No. 2), and "The Bridle" (No. 5) deal with the domestic tragedies which may possibly be caused by keeping a concubine or a mistress. "Repentance" (No. 8), and "When the Moon Rises" (No. 9) are recollections against the background of the personal situations of the cowardly love of early days, which could not result in marriage, and also they describe the suffering

at the reunions later on. "The Wedding that might Have Been" (No. 4), and "Thirty Years" (No. 6) describe friendships which resulted in the triangular competition of love, and the contrast between sincere marriage and fickle love attachments.

These eight stories are based mainly on the themes of love and marriage, but the remaining twelve deal with other aspects of human relationships, though some of them touch incidentally on the subjects of love and marriage, but not as the principal issue.

"The death of Yun Sssi, Mrs. Sin" (No. 11) is a historical novel, and tells of the suffering caused by the conflict between the three loyalties, loyalty to the king, confidence in one's husband, and a parents's love, all of which must be satisfied simultaneously. "A Mother and Her Sons" (No. 12) describes the unfiliality of sons, as contrasted with the eternal love of an unhappy mother. "A Bad Night" (No. 7) tells the story of a degenerate woman, brought down in the uneasy social conditions which followed the Second World War, and of the unsettled lives of the poor refugees. "The Pack-horse Driver" (No. 13) deals with a cunning profiteer, who tried to harm an innocent labourer with all possible plots. "The Former Sports Master" (No. 18), and "The Dormitory Inspector and the Love-letters" (No. 1) are about school-teachers, who suffer from the contradictions between their educational theories, and impossible realities.

"The Soil" (No. 10) and "The Story of the Villa Czangnang" (No. 20) represent the contrast between human life in the past ages of decay, and the new society. "The Soil" is only the first three sections of chapter I of a long novel of the same title, but it may also be taken as a short story complete in itself. "Sonata Appassionata" (No. 14) tells of a man of abnormal character, who commits various crimes which often have a mysterious effect on his artistic creations. "The Mind of an Ox" (No. 16), and "Cattle" (No. 17) both show the importance of cattle to Korean farmers. The cruel human being often does not understand the heart of the domestic animal, but he quarrels over money or principles and kills the animals, victims to human life. "A Puppet" (No. 19) describes a bird which is used as a puppet to suit a man's purposes. A duck entices its friends to their deaths, a reference to human treachery.

It will give me great pleasure if these stories can introduce some aspects of Korean life to English readers. The Romanization of proper names (surnames invariably precede personal names except the present author's, and the latter are hyphenated when they consist of two or more syllables) and Korean terms adopted in this book is based on the unified system which has been authorized for general use by two associations, the Korean Philological Society and the Korean Phonetic Association, being supported by the representatives of journalistic and educational organizations. The original plan of this system was drafted by myself and introduced by me at the 4th International Congress of Linguists held at Copenhagen in 1936. a, e, i, o, and u are pronounced as in Italian, a as in 'father', e as in 'bed', i as in 'sit' o as in 'boy', and u as the oo in 'book'. ㅏ is pronounced like a in 'about', e like the a in 'back', and u is to be pronounced as a vowel somewhere between i and u, the highest central vowel, with lips spread. Their long vowels are represented by the duplication of the same vowel. D, d, g, and z represent the English sounds of bin 'bed', din 'do', gin 'go', and j in 'joy' respectively, but they are devocalized when initial, and also devocalized but not exploded when final. B b, dd, gg, and zz have the non-aspirated and nonvoiced glottal tense valued of b, d, g, and j respectively. P, t, k, and cz are articulated like the English p, t, k, and ch respectively, but much more strongly aspirated.

Regarding the oral literature and old novels of Korea, readers are advised to refer to the introduction and tales of my publication, 'Folk Tales from Korea' (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London; Grove Press, New York; 1952), which included Korean myths, legends, fairy tales, fables, and old novels.

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